

I urge you to oppose the AT&T Comcast merger, which threatens the public interest principles that are essential to the Internet as an open and nondiscriminatory communications medium. The cable industry has long been characterized by anticompetitive local monopolies, restrictive control over content and services, high subscription rates and poor customer service. There is every reason to believe that these practices will be replicated in the combined company's control over high-speed Internet connections. AT&T Comcast will become a powerful media gatekeeper, leveraging its control over the network to exert undo influence over the evolution of broadband Internet content and services. The resulting lack of competition, innovation and diversity will harm both our economy and our democracy in the long run, with consumers left to bear the costs.

Here in Massachusetts, AT&T Broadband has bought up smaller cable companies and now dominates the market with over one million household subscribers, 150,000 in Boston alone. In just 16 months, AT&T has generally provided abysmal customer service, raised rates four times, reneged on a commitment to offer a genuine discount to senior citizens, made extensive use of out of state contractors (while still failing to build out the system as promised), and has ended an agreement with the Communications Workers of America and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers for neutrality when employees seek to form a union. AT&T just thumbs its nose at local franchising authorities. The competitive market cannot discipline this renegade company; federal regulators must act in the public interest